

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 040376

FOLLOWING REPEAT ISLAMABAD 1706 ACTION SECSTATE
INFO KABUL TEHRAN 17 FEB 77

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 1706

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PK, PINT, PFOR, SNAR

SUBJECT: GOP ANTI-NARCOTICS ACTIVITIES AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

REF: ISLAMABAD A-25

1. SINCE PAKISTAN IS A MAJOR PRODUCER OF OPIUM, BUT NOT YET A SOURCE FOR THE AMERICAN MARKET, THE EMBASSY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO PREPARE A REPORT ON RELEVANT POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE NARCOTICS SITUATION IN PAKISTAN. REPORT (REPAIR) IS BEING POUCHED TO ADDRESSEES; THIS MESSAGE SUMMARIZES CONTENTS. THE REPORT IS STRICTLY DESCRIPTIVE AND DOES NOT DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE PROGRAM OF THE GOP OR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO DIMINISH OR STOP OPIUM GROWING IN PAKISTAN. IT WAS WRITTEN BOTH TO GIVE WASHINGTON BACKGROUND ON THE
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POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS THAT AFFECT THE GOP APPROACH TO THE NARCOTICS ISSUE AND FOR THE MISSION NARCOTICS COMMITTEE TO USE IN THEIR OWN DELIBERATIONS ON THE NARCOTICS SITUATION IN PAKISTAN. FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF REPORT.

2. DESPITE CURRENT EFFORTS BY THE GOP, U.S. MISSION PERSONNEL, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO END THE ILLEGAL PRODUCTION

AND FLOW OF OPIUM, PRODUCTION AND TRAFFIC REMAIN AT HIGH LEVELS IN PAKISTAN. IF THE GOP ESCALATES ANTI-NARCOTICS ACTIVITIES FURTHER, IT WILL HAVE TO PAY DOMESTIC POLITICAL COSTS IT IS NOW PROBABLY UNWILLING AND PERHAPS UNABLE TO ASSUME.

3. OPIUM ABUSE IS NOT PERCEIVED AS AN INTERNAL PAKISTANI PROBLEM.

4. LICENSED OPIUM PRODUCTION IS RELATIVELY SMALL IN COMPARISON WITH PAKISTAN'S OVERALL OPIUM YIELD. LICENSED OPIUM IS A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF PROVINCIAL REVENUE. THEREFORE, ANY EFFORT TO CURB LICENSED GROWING WILL INCUR OPPOSITION FROM PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS. MOREOVER, THE PROFITABILITY OF THE LICENSED DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM RELIES ON THE AVAILABILITY OF ILLICIT OPIUM IN QUANTITIES FAR LARGER THAN LICIT SUPPLY. THE PROVINCES HAVE A VESTED INTEREST, THEREFORE, IN PERPETUATING THE EXISTENCE OF A LARGE AMOUNT OF ILLEGAL OPIUM.

5. OPIUM PRODUCTION IS LIMITED TO THE FRONTIER REGION OF PAKISTAN. MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF THE OPIUM COMES FROM THE FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS. BECAUSE NO GOVERNMENT HAS EVER BEEN ABLE TO EFFECTIVELY ADMINISTER THE REGION AND BECAUSE MOST PARTS ARE EXTREMELY REMOTE THE GOP WOULD FIND ENDING OPIUM PRODUCTION THERE POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY BEYOND ITS MEANS. THE REMAINDER OF PAKISTANI OPIUM COMES FROM THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE (NWFP), WHERE THE TRADE IS TACITLY CONDONED. THOSE ENGAGED IN THE TRADE ARE WEALTHY AND POLITICALLY INFLUENTIAL. THIS POLITICAL INFLUENCE INSULATES THE INDUSTRY FROM EFFECTIVE PROVINCIAL

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AND OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE.

6. THE MAJORITY POLITICAL PARTY, WHICH CONTROLS THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY STRONG IN THE NWFP TO MAKE LOCAL OFFICE-BEARER-MEMBERS ENFORCE AN EFFECTIVE ANTI-OPIUM DRIVE. RATHER, THE CENTRAL PARTY MUST COURT LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS FOR POLITICAL SUPPORT.

7. THOUGH THE ANNUAL HARVEST OF OPIUM IS LARGE, OPIUM CULTIVATION IN THE FRONTIER IS MAINLY CARRIED OUT IN SMALL, ISOLATED PATCHES IN PHYSICALLY REMOTE, DIFFICULT TERRAIN INHABITED BY ARMED, STAUNCHLY INDEPENDENT TRIBAL PEOPLE. THESE FACTORS INCREASE THE DIFFICULTY OF CARRYING OUT ANY PLAN TO ENFORCE A CURB ON POPPY CULTIVATION. MOREOVER, THE TRIBAL AREAS COULD PROBABLY INCREASE CULTIVATION TO OFFSET ANY DROP IN PRODUCTION IN THE PROVINCE. CURRENT STOCKPILES COULD COVER ANY INTERIM DROP IN PRODUCTION.

8. THE GOP IS UNLIKELY TO ENTER INTO A LARGE-SCALE, HIGHLY-

VISIBLE NARCOTICS CONTROL PROGRAM IN WHICH THE PERCEIVED COSTS EXCEED PERCEIVED BENEFITS; THE EFFECT WOULD BE POLITICALLY DAMAGING. THE RULING PARTY HAS A PHILOSOPHICAL COMMITMENT TO HELP THE POOR. SINCE FARMERS IN THE OPIUM-PRODUCING AREAS ARE AMONG THE POOREST PEOPLE IN PAKISTAN, ADMINISTRATORS AND POLITICIANS HESITATE TO UNDERTAKE PILOT PROJECTS IN NARCOTICS ABATEMENT WHICH WOULD ENTAIL A REDUCTION IN RURAL INCOME. THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT EXPLOITS THIS ATTITUDE TO DELAY PROGRAMS AND TO SECURE GREATER INPUT OF DEVELOPMENT FUNDS INTO NWFP.
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